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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000173

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG AND AF/C
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: MINAWI REFUSES TO GO TO DOHA

REF: A. KHARTOUM 169
[1B.](#) KHARTOUM 168

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶](#)1. (C) SLM leader Minni Minawi and UN/AU Chief Mediator Bassole had a "tough meeting" February 7 in El Fasher during which Minawi refused to travel to Doha this week as part of the Government of Sudan delegation, according to reports from both Minawi and Bassole's Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST). JMST contacts told polchief February 7 that a visibly hostile Minawi left a gun on the table between himself and Bassole, until the Chief Mediator politely asked him to remove it. Minawi angrily demanded to know why he wasn't issued a separate invitation to Doha by the Chief Mediator in his capacity as the head of the SLM/MM movement, rather than leaving it in the hands of the government to invite him. (Note: Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie called Minawi on February 6 to invite him to participate at Doha as part of the government delegation - which is the government's preference since Minawi is technically still the Senior Presidential Assistant per the terms of the Darfur Peace Agreement, which Minawi has not yet renounced even though he has returned to Darfur. End note.) Minawi accused Bassole of trying to sideline him in favor of a new agreement between the government and JEM. For his part, Bassole pressed Minawi to participate in Doha even as part of the government delegation, and if this would not be not possible to clarify his status either as a rebel or as part of the government. Bassole reportedly told Minawi that "you can't have it both ways."

[¶](#)2. (C) In his own read-out of the meeting by phone with CDA Fernandez later in the day February 7, Minawi also described the one-hour session with Bassole as a "hard meeting." Minawi said that he wasn't consulted adequately by the mediation or the government and demanded to know why the invitation to Doha had not come from the Chief Mediator himself. Minawi said he pointed out to Bassole that he had requested a meeting six months ago to determine where he would sit at negotiations and now it's being presented as a fait accompli. Minawi reported that Bassole said he had assured SLM/AW leader Abdel Wahid Nur that this round of talks in Doha are "not meant to be comprehensive but rather bilateral" and are a negotiation on certain specific issues between the government and JEM such as a cessation of hostilities. Minawi said he heard from the Qatars that one of the agenda items is to discuss JEM prisoners that remain in government custody since the time of the JEM attack on Omdurman/Khartoum in May 2008 - one of which is reportedly JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim's brother Abdel Aziz Osher. Minawi conceded to the CDA that the Doha talks are fine with him if they bring some relief to the people of Darfur, but the political framework that will be presented by Chief Mediator Bassole should not replace the Darfur Peace Agreement. Bassole reportedly assured Minawi that he will consult with

him again after the Doha talks, perhaps on 24-25 February.

¶3. (C) Minawi claimed that he has JEM surrounded in East Jebel Marra and that he has "closed the gates on them" as JEM attempts to flee Darfur to the safety of Chad. He said that JEM abandoned 30 vehicles along the way back between Shangil Tobaya and eastern Jebel Marra. Minawi crowed that many of the vehicles had run out of gas or had blown tires and proclaimed "now they are mine." UNAMID contacts told poloff on February 6 and 7 that JEM was fleeing along the Tabit-Galab route through eastern Jebel Marra and that SLA/AW appeared to be allowing JEM to pass through their areas unimpeded but without providing any support. UNAMID estimated that JEM might still have as many as 120 vehicles in eastern Jebel Mara but was unable to confirm this. UNAMID also reported that significant numbers of Arab militia had moved into Shangil Tobaya to prevent JEM from taking the town or using it to re-supply.

¶4. (C) MFA Under-Secretary Mutriff Siddiq, an NCP insider, told CDA Fernandez on February 8, that they were very unhappy with Minawi's attitude and refusal to attend the Doha talks. Siddiq conceded that Minawi was probably right that talks with JEM "are just a game, as JEM is not committed to peace in Darfur but to taking power in all of Sudan." But still, as the highest ranking Darfuri in the Government of National Unity, "Minni should be present". He added that despite SLM/MM's boycott, the NCP would share whatever result of the Qatari meetings with Minni and would need his help in making any cessation of hostilities and ceasefire mechanism work.

¶5. (C) Comment: Following its misadventure in Muhajaria, JEM
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appears to have fully withdrawn from South Darfur and may have incurred some losses in the process. It appears likely that JEM may reach some sort of security agreement with the government in Doha, if nothing else to demonstrate that it is currently the preeminent rebel force in Darfur (the reason it has always demanded bilateral talks with the government in the first place), to curry favor with weary foreigners eager for a Darfur breakthrough and perhaps to negotiate the release of JEM prisoners. In any event the negotiators on both the government and JEM teams will be very familiar with each other since Khalil Ibrahim was once a leading member in President Bashir's National Islamic Front movement that took power in a coup in 1989. For his part, Minawi finds himself in a difficult situation - not wanting to relinquish his status as the only major signatory of the DPA but refusing to sit as part of the government delegation in peace talks. Minawi could well become a spoiler of future peace talks if Chief Mediator Bassole is not able to negotiate some sort of special status for Minawi, recognizing that he is technically part of the government but retains his own army, which was never incorporated into the Sudanese Armed Forces due to non-implementation of other parts of the DPA by the government.

FERNANDEZ